

SATURDAY, OCT. 8, 1870.

Subject: The Sufficiency of Jesus.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



NEW-YORK:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 39 PARK ROW.

1870.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.
European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 183 Fleet Street, London
Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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POSTAGE OF PLYMOUTH PULPIT to subscribers in the United States is twenty cents per year, payable quarterly, in advance, at the Post-Office to which the pamphlet is sent; and on single copies to England it is four cents.

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

I. The Duty of Using One's Life for Others. II. The God of Comfort. III. The Nobility of Confession. IV. Self-Control Possible to All. V. Pilate, and his Modern Imitators. VI. The Strong to Bear with the Weak. VII. Growth in the Knowledge of God. VIII. Contentment in all Things. IX. Abhorrence of Evil. X. Privileges of the Christian. XI. The Love of Money. XII. Divine Influence on the Human Soul. XIII. Moral Affinity, the True Ground of Unity. XIV. The Value of Deep Feelings. XV. Works Meet for Repentance. XVI. Malign Spiritual Influences. XVII. The Old and the New. XVIII. The Hidden Christ. XIX. Well-Wishing not Well-Doing. XX. Sphere of the Christian Minister. XXI. Suffering, the Measure of Worth. XXII. The Victory of Hope in Sorrow. XXIII. The Crime of Degrading Men. XXIV. Self-Conceit in Morals. XXV. Morality, the Basis of Piety. XXVI. The Trinity. XXVII. The Family, as an American Institution.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

I. The Way of Coming to Christ. II. Conduct, the Index of Feeling. III. The Sympathy of Christ. IV. Retribution and Reformation. V. Counting the Cost. VI. Scope and Function of a Christian Life. VII. Human Ideas of God. VIII. The Graciousness of Christ. IX. Evils of Anxious Forethought. X. The Beauty of Moral Qualities. XI. The Problem of Joy and Suffering in Life. XII. The Apostolic Theory of Preaching. XIII. The Right and the Wrong Way of Giving Pleasure. XIV. The Perfect Manhood. XV. Dissimulating Love. XVI. The Door. XVII. Moral Theory of Civil Liberty. XVIII. Peaceableness. XIX. Soul-Drifting. XX. The Hidden Life. XXI. Discouragements and Comforts in Christian Life. XXII. Hindrances to Christian Development. XXIII. Loving and Hating. XXIV. Authority of Right over Wrong. XXV. The Power of Love. XXVI. The Preciousness of Christ.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

I. Watchfulness. II. Paul and Demetrius. III. Consolations of the Suffering of Christ. IV. Treasure that Cannot be Stolen. V. Bearing, but not Overborne. VI. The Holy Spirit. VII. Ideal Standard of Duty. VIII. Faults. IX. The Comforting God. X. The Name Above Every Name. XI. National Unity. XII. Social Obstacles to Religion. XIII. Christ, the Deliverer. XIV. The God of Pity. XV. Sin Against the Holy Ghost. XVI. Inheritance of the Meek. XVII. Memorials of Divine Mercy. XVIII. The Victorious Power of Faith. XIX. The Peace of God. XX. Coming to One's Self. XXI. Fragments of Instruction. XXII. The Substance of Christianity. XXIII. Spiritual Blindness. XXIV. Perfect Peace. XXV. Preparation for Death. XXVI. Fidelity to Conviction.

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THE SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS.

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—HEB. XII., 2.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, which for a long time was ascribed to the apostle Paul, but which, it seems to me, no man who ever felt what Paul's style was could for a moment believe that he wrote—for as near as I can recollect, the word *I* does not appear in the Epistle to the Hebrews once from beginning to end, and it is simply impossible that Paul should have written as much as that and not brought in *I* a hundred times; the Epistle to the Hebrews, which the best modern scholarship is now more and more ascribing to Apollos, mighty in Scripture, presents (although through the medium of the old Jewish ideas, and therefore comparatively to the Jewish want) the noblest aspect of the hopeful side of God which is contained, perhaps, in any of the Epistles of the New Testament. It contains, not, perhaps, more that touches us, but more that would have touched the educated imagination of a truly spiritual Jew, than any other one of all the Epistles. And the view given of Christ, of God as represented by Christ, all the way through, is full of the tenderest encouragement and of the greatest beauty.

In that portion from which we have selected our text, the writer had been discussing the matter of faith, meaning by that the higher exercise of the moral faculties of the mind; or, living, not by the animal economy, and by the animal passions, but by the reason and the moral sentiments, whose action is always in a sphere higher than that of sense, or of matter.

From the earliest age, there had been those who had lived more or less perfectly by this nobler conception of life, and in the presence of invisible things. And although it was not a life that could compare with that of those who live now, or who have lived since that time, we are to remember that, in the early day, the disclosures of truth were very limited, and that, to live as Abraham did, as the patriarchs did, and as the prophets did, required far more faith than to live in that wise in

our day, when so much more has been given to us. This conviction of spiritual truth had held men in all past times, the writer says, to the highest achievements of humanity. They had borne; they had suffered; they had achieved wonders: and all by this power of faith—this sense of truth invisible.

He then goes on to sum up and marshal the eminent names of the ages, one by one. He recounts their principal achievements. And when the last is completed, or rather summarized in the end, when the hearers are full of these venerable associations, he declares that the shadows of all these noble spirits overhang them, and are spectators of their strife. All those who, gathered out of the thousands of years preceding, had gone home to glory, waited, as it were, on the threshold of heaven, on the borders of that land, to look out upon us, and upon those of every age who are making the same fight which they made. They watch the progress of the conflict, and wait till, one after another, all that are called come through to their victory. And they, too, in turn, become spectators, as it were, in sympathy, and participants again in the same strife in others which they had victoriously waged.

In this august assembly, the highest name of all sufferers is the name of Jesus. He, too, is looking upon our life struggle; he, too, with all that have gone before from among men, is watching those who are coming along on this road. He is presented to us, not as watching from curiosity; not as watching merely from enthusiasm.

On the heights above Sedan, during that terrific conflict, there were two watchers. One, Sheridan, our own man, watched with all the enthusiasm of a warrior; but in the vast host before him it is not probable that there was one person in whose veins his blood beat. Right by his side King William watched; and there were both of his sons leading parts of that gigantic army. And though both of them—the king and the general—were warriors and watchers, the *king's heart* was in his eye. His was, therefore, the outlook, not merely of generalship, but of paternal love as well.

Now, Christ is watching, from heaven, those in whom his heart is, and in whom his blood is. He is watching paternally, and not merely as a spectator would watch in the excitement of a contest.

This presentation of Jesus is not on that side where the divine attributes mostly are brought out. We know only so much of God as can be likened to something corresponding to Him in man; and therefore it is that by searching we shall never find out the Almighty to perfection. That which is distinct from man is unknown and unknowable. That which, as it were, is the beginning, or elementary part, of the divine nature, is so like man, that, being made in the image

of God, we can understand it; but, going on, we soon lose company. For that which is peculiarly and distinctively divine as separate from all human parallel or likeness, we have no means of understanding. That goes on beyond comprehension. It is not that part of the divine nature, therefore, which the writer attempts to set forth, but only that part which, in the Bible, is likened to something in man. This has been much objected to by philosophers and theologians—*anthropomorphism*, as it is called, or the likening of God to man. But to deny this mode of representation is substantially to destroy the possibility of knowing God, and is to make atheism the only possible ground on which man can stand. More, perhaps, than any other part of the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews develops the tender and sympathetic side of God's nature, as represented in Christ. Hence, in Christ, the throne of Government is represented as filled, not so much by law, not so much by penalty, not so much by rigor, not so much by power and authority, as by the sympathy of love. He came, not for judgment, but for mercy, and in consonance with this view which he proclaims of himself all the way through the writings of the apostles. While they did not ignore law and government, they pre-dominatingly represented Christ as the presentation of God's law of love and mercy to the world. Law underlies everything. We do not need to prove that. It is the organic law of creation. It exists. We know that, because it is constantly falling upon us—or we upon it. Men stumble over it all the time, on every side, and every day. There is no need, therefore, of vindicating law. It takes care of itself. A release from transgressed law is that which needs to be advocated and to be made plain. Sympathy and helpfulness on the divine side toward those who have broken law, and have set at naught the divine government—this is the necessity; and this is that which the apostle—or the writer, if it be Apollos—here chiefly does. He presents a view of God in marked contrast with the heathen notion. For, although there were traits of excellence, the general idea of the heathen gods was that of an essential monarch, with a concentrated selfishness of purpose, and with arbitrary power for the accomplishment of results. The view of God presented after the revelation in Jesus Christ, is a view of divine mercy, divine sympathy, and divine helpfulness. And it is toward this that we are commanded to look in every time of need.

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame; and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

When we are in trouble, whatever that trouble may have arisen from—whether from sin, or from conscience, or from affection, or from remorse, or from bereavement—the command is, *Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith*—not to Jehovah,

if by *Jehovah* you mean the God of law; not to God, as administering penalty; but to Jesus, who stands, to the universal human heart, as the representative of recovering mercy. We are to look to pity, to sympathizing sorrow, in the hand of God. In every trouble, and in every temptation of trouble, look to that side of the divine nature—not at the clouds; not at the mountain that burned with fire; not at that which was clothed with darkness, and out of which thunder spoke. That was the older dispensation. The same writer, in the same chapter, which I read in the opening service, said,

“Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.”

In other words, we are come to that side of the divine nature which represents rescue, release, recovery, salvation, and eternal joy. All through the chapter, it is, “In your struggle of life, watched by ten thousand witnesses, who have been through life as you have been, and are now safe, look to Jesus for rescue. Look not to the terrible side of the divine government but to the merciful side. Look to Him who has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin—a merciful High-priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; who has suffered in our stead, that we might not suffer.” We are commanded to look to that aspect of the divine government in all our trouble.

If this be the representation which is made, it presents a use for Christ of the most practical character; and it is the practical side of this exhortation to which I mainly shall address myself this morning.

In view of this exhortation I remark,

1. Those who feel no need of Christ; those who never are impelled to look to Him; those who have no conscious dependence upon Him, are, according to the teaching of this Scripture, disowned of God, and are bastards. In other words, the condition in which we find ourselves in this world, is one which begins with imperfections, and imperfections which lead inevitably to sins of one kind and another. The world has racked its brains to understand how sin entered the world; and theories and explanations without end have been put forth; but I understand sin to be simply the ignorance of men as to how to carry the faculties which they have in them—not merely their ignorance, but in connection with that ignorance the want of that moral development which shall enable them to carry all parts of their soul skilfully, harmoniously, and rightly. Sin, therefore, regarded as the out-working of the imperfection of this system, came in with the coming in of creation itself. You cannot create men at the seminal point. It being the problem of the universe to develop a race of creatures, step by step, to the very highest point, it is utterly impossible that

there should be such a system instituted in the world as that human beings should be wise from the beginning. We have the problem of the introduction of sin in our own families, every one of us. Our children are born, not men, but babies. They are born ignorant, and inexpert. Every boy and every girl has to learn, through years, to think and to feel, and the laws of thinking and feeling. Every child studies about his foot, and hand, and eye, and every sense, all through his nature; and the household shields him, and economizes his mistakes so as to educate him, and bring him up so that he shall know how to use himself. That is only over again in the family just the something that took place on the grand scale of the whole world. All the race was born in infancy; and, as a child finds his way through inexperience, so the race find their way through inexperience. And sins are simply the faults which fall out from the want of knowledge, and from the want of motive-power to do the things which are right in men.

Now, this want of experience, this want of knowledge, this inequality of faculty, this jar and conflict, this discord, is universal. There is not a man born, and there never was a man born, who knew how to carry himself so as not to go into moral discords.

Men do not like the term *total depravity*. Nor do I; and I never use it. And I do not like the thing itself. But you might as well expect to find a man born a hundred years old, as to expect to find a man born without a depraved nature. When you shall find me a child knowing all arithmetic at one year old, expert in all music at one year old, a universal historian at one year old, an athlete at one year old, full of all temporal wisdom at one year old, then, and not before, I will find you another child that is born into this world expert in all virtue, in all truth, in all moral purity, in all upward tendencies. The fact is, men are born at the lowest point of the scale, and work their way up through cycles of inexperience and mistakes and transgressions to the highest point. And it is not a slander to say that men are depraved, unless it be a slander to say that this is the method of the divine creation, or that this is the way that the world is organized. If there be one truth that shall stand and burn after all theologies shall have passed away, or shall have changed, it is this truth of universal decrepitude, universal weakness in good, or universal imperfection, running, in adult states, to transgressions, and becoming sinful, so that every man in the race, with every particular faculty of his nature, sins, has sinned, and continues to sin. There is such a thing as universal sinfulness,—if you prefer that phrase to *universal depravity*; choose your own language, so that you do not escape from the mournful, melancholy fact that the whole race is sinful.

Now, for a man to stand contented in this moral state is as igno-

minious in the sight of God, and a thousand times more so, as in our sight it is for one to be ignorant in secular affairs. It is a stigma upon a man, unless he is a foreigner, to say that he cannot read and write. We always make a distinction in judgment if we know that a man has come from abroad, where he has had no opportunities for instruction, and where he has been subjected to squalid poverty and brute oppression. We excuse a man's ignorance under such circumstances. But for a native-born American, north of Mason's and Dixon's line, not to be able to read and write, is a disgrace that marks him out in the whole village, and throughout all the neighborhood. Secular ignorance is a disgrace among men. And as moral excellence is greater than mere intellectual and secular excellence, so moral ignorance is greater than intellectual or secular ignorance; and contentment in it is degrading and anmanly.

Any man, then, who, being sinful before God, and coming short in every faculty and part of his nature, aspires to rise out of that state, and come to a higher experience, and attempts it, very soon feels his need of a schoolmaster, and of a schoolmaster, not that has a rod, but that has kindness. Every man who has aspiration, and who feels that he must grow in nobleness, in purity, in self-government, in beneficence, in every element of a true manhood, comes to feel that such growth requires that there shall be something to help him from above.

Here, the clouds gather so soon about us, we become discouraged so soon, we are so little able to be our own models, we fall into such biases and into such temptations, that if we have not some shining mark before us, we soon grow into forgetfulness or discouragement. Therefore it is that we have the pattern man, Jesus Christ—God represented in the spirit of man; therefore it is that we have the divine attributes presented in the form of human faculties and experiences. And we are commanded to look to him in this life struggle, in this work of education, and of emancipation from lower stages into a higher condition. *Look to Jesus.*

There are many who are content, however, with simply a development into the society idea. So that they have health and position in life, that satisfies them. I have heard men of excellent parts in other things saying that they see no use of heaven; that this world is good enough for them. Since then I have seen their cradle turned bottom-side up. Since then I have seen their till emptied. Since then I have seen them making settlement of bankrupt estates. Since then I have seen their names cast out, and them hunted. It is a very different thing, in the beginning of life, to say that the world is good enough for you, from what it is at the end of life. When they have gone through from first to last, and taken the good or evil of life, few men

say that. Few men who have come to gray hairs, utter any such nonsense as this world is good enough for them. Of any man who says that, God says, "He is not a child; he is a bastard."

If in this life you endure chastening; if you have those little struggles which bring you in conflict with your various surroundings, so that you are pressed down with disappointments and trials, which are God's chastisements upon you, it is a sign that you are ambitious; it is a sign that you want to rise to a higher estate; it is a sign that you are a son of God. This ambition to be something high is a sign of nobility. But if you have no struggles, it is a sign that you are not carrying yourself against anything. And if you are not, it is because you are torpid and stupid, and not noble, and therefore are not a son of God.

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

God will not own you if you have not experienced suffering.

We are not to interpret this so as to exclude providential troubles; but the accent and emphasis is not to be on the thought that God deals with us as with sons, when he deals with us by providential afflictions. All the struggles which come from the desire of man to emancipate himself from the lower conditions of life; all those conflicts which grow up in a man who is determined in his heart to repress inordinate pride, and beat down vanity, and restrain lust, and make a new man of himself—they are the chastisements of God. And the laying on of these sufferings is an indication that God perceives that you are striving for the higher life. He is dealing with you, therefore, in all helpfulness, as with a child. But if you have none of these things, God sees that you are not his son. The want of suffering, and strife, and sorrow, and penitence, and despondency, and aspiration, and yearning, indicates that you are ignoble, and out of the divine family.

Hence, they who pity men that suffer a great deal about their religion, are themselves to be pitied. That is the condition of thousands of persons who look upon church-members as pitiable. Many of *them* are pitiable. There are persons who look upon all that are seeking a religious life as pitiable, because they do not have liberty; because they are tied up; because they cannot enjoy the world as worldlings do. But I affirm the contrary—that no man can or does enjoy so much of this world as that man who is aiming to prepare himself for the kingdom of God's glory. The religion of Jesus Christ is not ascetic, nor sour, nor gloomy, nor circumscribing. It is full of sweetness in the present, and in promise; and the only suffering which it entails is such suffering as the liar experiences in learning to tell the truth. Do you

not think it is worth while for a dishonest man to suffer, for the sake of being honest? He loses a great many chances, to be sure. I can understand how a reformed pickpocket, passing by a pompous man, and seeing his pompous watch on his pompous belly, might say, "I remember the time when I would have had that;" and it is a self-denial to him. But do not you think that a pickpocket on the way to virtue is a great deal happier than a man that would steal?

These are low illustrations and familiar instances; but the principle is the same when a man is endeavoring to become like Jesus Christ, and to gain a higher conception of character and manhood, and finds obstacles in his way, such as pride and lust. He has, we will suppose, a battle with pride and lust. And there is the only place where his suffering comes in. He is attempting to live in a community that would laugh down sobriety. He has to stand up against the community and say, "I will not drink though every man that I meet drinks. I will not gamble though all my companions gamble."

Says a man in a frontier settlement who carries his father's integrity with him, "I will be upright and virtuous." And he keeps his resolution. And all his neighbors deride him. And he has to take up his cross. But do you not think that his suffering is overbalanced by the joy which comes from his consciousness that he lives in superior manhood, and is nobler than any one of them? Religion does lay on men some degree of suffering; but it is the suffering of emancipation.

See how a man will work to get out of prison. I remember some stories that I used to read, of how a prisoner turned a knife into a universal tool; how he scraped the mortar, and took out a floor stone, and little by little, day and night, removed the dirt, till finally he had excavated a little chamber; how he carried the dirt and hid it in his bed; how, with curious device, he went down and down until he struck under the foundation of the prison sill; how then he came to the light, and took observation as to where he was coming out; how he found that he was still inside of the high fence; and how he notched the post so that he could climb to the top; and how he tore his blankets and let himself down on the other side, and went free. Thief though he was, liberty was sweet to him. And what suffering he endured; how often he gashed his hands, that he might gain it! He said to himself, "Only let me get out and have my freedom, and I am willing to risk my life."

Now, let a man feel that he is a prisoner to lust, to appetite, to dominant passion, and he says, "I will be free from this," and commences working to get rid of his chains, and burrows, if need be, excavates, to get out of doors, and scales the fence, in order that he may

gain his freedom in a larger and nobler sense than the criminal ever knows it. But the impulse is the same.

What would you say of such a man, if he got out of prison? Would you say that he paid too high a price for his freedom? Or would you say that it was worth all it cost him, though it required some pain-bearing and life-risking to get it?

Religion is got by men who are a great way from it, and they have to take steps to come to it. We employ tears, and sometimes cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye; but when once a man has come into the spirit of Christ Jesus, he sees religion for the first time in a new light; and he says of it, "That is not sour nor gloomy. It is triumphant, exultant, victorious peace in this life. It gives me a brighter sun. It gives me a nobler night. It gives me more beauty in all the seasons. It gives me my Father's world, and no longer a smitten world. It gives me things here, and more yet in the world to come. And no man knows how to enjoy the day or the night, the year or the seasons, no man knows how to enjoy secular blessings, so well as he who has victoriously trusted himself in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If, then, you have no need of looking unto Jesus, it is because you are without aspiration; it is because you are degraded; it is because you do not understand either your present condition or the dangers which fall upon you in consequence of it; it is because you have not a touch or taste of the divine nature in your souls. He who has no occasion to look unto Jesus is degraded and vulgar—for vulgarity does not mean poor clothes. Vulgarity means a poor soul. A mean soul in broadcloth is vulgar. A mean man who has a crown on is vulgar; and a pauper with a king's soul in him is royal. He who can live in this life and say, "Husks are good enough for me, and the pigs that I associate with, and that are my companions, are good enough for me; I have no need of looking unto Jesus"—woe be to that man! Woe be to him whose heart does not ring out every day, in every time of need, "Look unto Jesus—*look unto Jesus.*" Woe be to the man who has no time of conscious need.

2. Men, in their life-struggles, are to look to Christ rather than to turn their eyes upon themselves—which is the tendency of men. We are apt to think very little of ourselves, until we begin to attempt to break away from bad habits and evil courses; but then we shoot into the opposite morbid extreme, and think of almost nothing else. It is very true that one must examine himself, and know something of himself; but it does not follow, because we must have a knowledge of our own sinful condition, and so must think about ourselves, that the more we do it the better we are off. It is wise that a man should know himself

to be so sick as to need to see his physician; but the physician says, "Think about your sickness as little as you can." He draws him off from his symptoms as much as possible. And when a man is roused to a sense of sin, and the consequent danger of sin, it is not wise for him to look at himself too much. It is not wise for you to turn your eyes inward too much upon that gulf of the heart, which every one of you has in him. We are not to swing round as in an eddy or whirlpool in a dark gorge. We are to look unto Jesus, rather. Every man whose pride is wounded; every man whose vanity is wounded; every man who has been overthrown by lusts; every man whose appetites have carried him away captive; every man who has violated the law of the land and overstepped the bounds of divine law; every man who has gone counter to the dictates of his own conscience, and disobeyed the tribunal of his best thoughts; every man who convicts himself of wickedness, is not to sit, and read over and over and over again the sentence of the condemnation that is pronounced against him. God does not think this needful. His command is, *Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.*

It is this very moral sensibility that he has begun; and out of this very moral sensibility he will work cure to the world. And the first step for every wholesome nature, when conscious of having done wrong, is not so much to attempt to repair the wrong, is certainly not to go back and chew the bitter cud of memory, ruminating on transgression, but to look unto Jesus, and be forgiven; and then, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press toward the work for the prize of the high calling of God." That is the command. And it is sensible. It addresses itself to the moral consciousness of every man, and to every man's sense of things fit and right.

And yet, there are many persons who set their life up before them, and look it over, and review it again and again. Sometimes people keep journals; and when a man keeps a journal of his religious experience he never will lack a fool's looking-glass; and he will see himself in it every time, too. If there is one place where the devil is surer to get a man than anywhere else, it is when he is writing his journal. And yet many think they grow in grace by an anatomical process of analyzing their motives. They think about their motives, and they want to discriminate as to what they shall put down; and, generally speaking, a man lies every time he dips his pen into the ink. For although a journal has, in pompous letters, on the outside, "To be read by no one but me, and in case of my death, I enjoin my affectionate friends to burn this manuscript," he knows that these *affectionate friends* will read it, for the same reason that when you see on a door, "No Admittance,"

you are all the more anxious to go in, because you think there is something there worth seeing. And when a man says, "I have a journal that has something in it which I do not want anybody in creation to read," everybody in creation wants to read it, and all creation would not stop you from reading it. And when it is read, it is exaggerated. It is filled with deceptive statements. A man does not choose to gibe himself on every page of his journal, and tell how wicked a man he is. A man may tell how wicked he is, but not how *mean* he is. And, after all, the meanness is the worst part of wickedness. But that is the thing which does not go down in a journal. Yet there are persons who draw out the long black lines of record, as if it were of any use to them, or to anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath. A journal of a man's morbid economy might better not be kept. You have enough to do with that economy anyhow. It is sufficient that you have experiences growing out of it from hour to hour and from day to day. Cast behind you these things. The sins that you have committed are evil. Do not keep them. Throw them into the draught. Let them sink to the bottom of the sea.

There are men who have committed great sins, and who are like the knight that used to wear sackcloth in order that the scratching might remind him of having, perhaps, murdered his royal master, and who never wanted to forget that he was a murderer. But what is the use of remembering one's crimes? Some set apart days to remind them of the sins of the olden time. They want to keep them in memory. But what is the use of keeping one's sins in memory? You are not the children of night, that you should set up a monument of darkness of this kind. It is not worth a man's while, after he has once escaped, to ponder the things of the olden time. It is not in accordance with New Testament truth, or God's truth, or Christ's truth. Forget, *forget*, forget! God promises that he will do it; and he commands you to do it. "I will never make mention again of your transgressions," he says to men. He declares that their sins shall be cast as into the depths of the sea. And why should a man trouble and vex himself about his past sins. Do you suppose you are any better for remembering that which crushes you and fills you with pain? Pain is like emery. If it scours anything that wants to be scoured, it is good. Otherwise it is not good. He who seeks mere pain is an idolator. While the strife and conflict of sin is on you, then look at it and fight it; but when it is past, then throw it away, and forget it. Never look long at yourself, or at the old burnt out craters in life. Never linger long in the precincts where you have suffered a great deal. You are children of light. Look unto Jesus. Look unto him, as he sitteth above, in the midst of the myriads of those who have been just like

you; of those who have wept over ten thousand transgressions; of those that overcame their sins at last, and are saved with an everlasting salvation. In their midst, crowned with joy, floral as the summer, Christ sits. And every sinner who mourns over his sins, and would triumph over them, is commanded to look to him. Do not look to yourselves, nor to your sins, but to *Jesus*.

3. Christ is to be sought, not after we have overcome our sins; not after we have gained a victory over our transgressions. In the old lists, or in the Schützen games of the knights, the queen was selected, and she sat in the centre on the upraised seat; and after the knights had made proof of their skill and prowess, and their adversaries were cast down, then the one that had come out conqueror, soiled and weary, and with his armor dashed and dented, came forward, and was crowned by the queen. But he had to go through the conflict first.

A great many think that Christ sits with a coronet in his hand, to crown those who are victorious, after they shall have fought their own battles. And so He does, in one sense. We are to be final victors, and then are to be finally crowned in heaven. But there is a sense in which this is false. That is to say, if you suppose that the condition on which you are to look to Jesus for succor is that you shall overcome your pride; if you say, "I have fallen into habits of self-indulgence, I want to be free, and I would go to God and promise Him that I will reform, only I have been a thousand times, and it has never availed, and I shall fail again, and I dare not go any more until I have some evidence in myself that I shall be able to stand in my own resolution"—then you take a wrong view of this matter. People say, "I would go to God if I felt that I could promise anything, and that I could keep my promise."

That is not it. You are a helpless captive; you are under a tormenting master; and Jesus is your deliverer. And shall not the captive cry out to his deliverer until he has broken his own chains? Are you not sinning every day? Is not sin your master? And while you are sinning are you not an unfortunate soul, carried away captive? And is it not declared that Jesus came to break shackles, to open prison doors, to give sight to the blind, and to give hearing to the deaf? He comes to rescue men. And the time when a man is to look to Jesus most confidently is—when he is in his sins, and when he knows that he will sin again.

Your cup betrayed you to-day, and your cup will betray you to-morrow. You have fallen into self-indulgent pleasures to-day, and you know that you will fall into them to-morrow. You have tried for months, and perhaps years, to get rid of your sins, and you cannot get rid of all of them. You can give up one thing and another that is

wrong, but you cannot give up all wrong things. You cannot help longing to be a better man, and you cannot prevent these evils which spring from the flesh. You are waiting, and hoping that the time will come when you can present yourself as a fit person to join the Church, and when you can present yourself at the table of the Lord, saying, "I have conquered." Oh! it will be a joyful day when you can say that; but you need to go to Christ a great while before then. You need to go to Him, to get pity; to get succor; to get inspiration. There is no time when Christ is so needed by a man's soul as when that soul is sinning from day-to-day. That is the time, above all other times, when you need to go to Him.

I used to work out my sums wearily—when I worked them out at all—at my seat, on my slate; and when I had done them, I went to my master to show them to him with some pleasure; but I did not need to show them to him, so far as any benefit to me was concerned. I did not need to be helped, after I had worked out my sums myself. But when I had got stuck—which was ninety-nine times in a hundred—I then went to him, in order to have him show me how to work them out. And then it was that the master did me good. Before, I felt good when I got out the sum—rare triumph! but ordinarily I went to him that he might teach me. It was help that I needed.

It is a good thing for a man whose physician last saw him with all the airs of an invalid, to surprise his physician some bright morning, by calling upon him, and saying, "Behold a man risen from the dead, Doctor!" That is a very pleasant thing. But ah! it is not then only that a man should see his doctor. When he lies full of suffering, and is growing worse and worse, is the time that he should send for his doctor. A man should send for his physician, not when he has got well, but while he is sick, that he may get well.

We need to go to Jesus as victors, as we shall, one day, if we are faithful; but ah! He will not be so necessary to me when I shall have passed through death, as He is to-day, and to-morrow, and every day, until I die. It is now that I need Him. My times of need are in my conflicts here. It is in this mortal thrall, it is in the breaking of the bands which are tougher than my strength, it is in the temptations that lurk about me on every side, that I need help. It is in the midst of my strifes and struggles that I need a saviour. And it is in your times of need that you should go to Christ: but not when you are conscious that you are getting better, but when you know that you are getting no better, but worse. Jesus is your soul's Physician, and Teacher, and succoring Friend. And He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And if there is any one who is conscious of being in moral degradation, the command to him is, *Look unto Jesus*. He is the

All-Helpful, and he will succor you, and will teach you how to gain a victory.

We are not to grieve Christ by despondency and despair in overmeasure, arising out of our evil courses. Many persons fall into the notion that in some sense they make atonement of sin, if afterwards they compel themselves to suffer for it. But we are not to be selfish. We are to remember that, being delivered from our transgressions, we are not our own, but another's—that we belong to Christ.

When Christ was on earth, men were brought to him to be healed. You will observe how He healed them. He said to them, "Take up thy bed and walk!" Suppose a man had taken up his bed, and also his crutches, and gone hobbling off, what would the multitude have thought? And if they had stopped him, and questioned him, and he had said that he was healed, would they not have said to him, "Why do you not stand up straight then? Why do you hobble? Nobody will believe that you are healed. That is not the way to reflect credit on the Master and His power. Throw away your crutches, and take your pallet on your shoulders and walk so that everybody will see that you are well?"

When a man has been drinking forty years, it is never necessary for him to say, "I have been a drunkard." Everybody will know it; and there will be enough to throw it up to him and keep him in memory of it. You do not need ever to say, "I have been a gambler,"—for I believe that Christ is able to save even a gambler. You may have been an impure person; you may have wallowed in wickedness; and when you have risen out of your degradation, there will be a strong temptation for you to run along on the ground and make yourself humble by degrading yourself. But remember that you are healed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you have a testimony to give to him, which all the world may see; viz., that, whereas you were blind, now you see. And it is the healing that is to be uppermost in your testimony. It is the grace of God which has restored you, that is to be on your lip. "I once was lost, but now am found," is to be your declaration. Your song should be one of glory and joy, and not one of remorse. Look forward. Do not be forever troubling your peace by looking backward. Bear a testimony that shall be worthy of him who has loved you, and redeemed you, and is to make you a king and priest unto God.

4. There is to be encouragement to all those who undertake reformation from sins that seem to them inexpugnable. No man is so great a sinner that he may not repent and turn to God. No man is so great a sinner that, if he try to help himself, God will not help him, and give him a victory. There is no need that any man should con-

tinue in any course of sin. There is no sympathy wanting; there is no hindrance that may not be overcome; there is no power that is equal to that which is exerted in his behalf. For Jesus reigns, and administers nature, and the whole realm of grace in this world, everything, that he may cleanse the impure, forgive transgression, and build up, out of the youth, and out of the inexperience of our earthly life, a manhood of noble simplicity and beauty; and that he may at last present us before the throne of God and his Father, with joy forevermore.

Now, my dear Christian friends, as I have always sought in my ministry among you to make Christ the one, the chief among ten thousand; so when, after this little interval in my preaching, I begin, as it were, again, the new preacher's year, my first message to you is that of the sufficiency of Jesus, who is God manifest in the flesh—his sufficiency for all your want; for your sin; for your sorrow; for your mistakes; for your inexperience; for your despondency; for your hopelessness; for your heartlessness; for everything to which flesh is heir. Look unto Jesus.

Oh, blessed Benefactor! if it be more blessed to give than to receive, how great is the joy of heaven! What streams of mercy are issuing from the heart of God! What boundless benefaction, inexhaustible, and forever growing richer and deeper, is treasured up for us! And if with every upspringing mercy there is upspringing joy in the heart of God, God is the happiest being in the universe, because he is the most beneficent.

Into his service we come. And now, to-day, we shall take hold again of this life; and as we shall join invisible hands, and join hearts, as we draw near to the table of our crucified Redeemer (not crucified, blessed be God—the only crucified Saviour left is the symbolic; but the ever-risen Prince, the Glory and the Power of heaven, who lives forever in endless joy); as we shall gather around the historic memorial, to celebrate the love of Christ, let every one of us look at his own experience, and no one of us drop a tear, or feel a pang of sorrow. He has suffered for us. Look up, long, gaze, and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If there be any souls here, whether they belong to the outward Church of Christ or not, who belong, conscious of this faith and longing, to the living Jesus, I invite them to this feast of the Lord. For, although the Church, for form's sake, and propriety's sake, administers the Lord's Supper, the Church does not own it, any more than it owns the Bible. The Lord's Supper belongs to every individual who cleaves to the Saviour. And I make the invitation of this church, with the consent of the brotherhood, to all who have a con-

scious reliance upon the Lord Jesus. You are competent to judge, whether, sinful as you are, and unworthy as you are, you look to Jesus for all your hope of salvation; and all who do, I invite to sit with us and partake of these emblems of mercy and love.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We thank thee, our Father, for the day in which we were taught to know thee. We thank thee for those continuous disclosures which have been made from time to time, for the Word, and for that providence and that inward experience wrought by the Holy Spirit, through which the heart itself becomes luminous, and thy providences are interpreted. For in thee we live and move and have our being. And when we are not conscious of thee, we have no life; we are orphans; we wander, and are aliens for the commonwealth of Israel. But what time thou dost bring us back to the consciousness of thy life, of thy love, of all the blessed things which thou hast prepared for us, we live indeed. No longer in disturbance of our lower passions, no longer in the midst of dins, and jars, and conflicts with outward things and circumstances, we are brought into the sanctuary of peace. Our inward thoughts are enlightened by thy Spirit. We are lifted above ourselves, and we are what we are in God. We are made pure by thought of purity for us. Thou dost clothe us as we shall be, even now as we are. Thou dost look at us and see what that to which we are coming by thy grace will do as in thy sight now. As we look upon our children, and imagine that to which they are coming, but with an erring gaze, and with many mistakes, and yet with much comfort, and are patient with their weakness till they shall reach their strength, and with their faults till they shall have learned their virtues better, so more gloriously, in a greater amplitude of love, with infinite pity and infinite tenderness, and forbearance, and gentleness, thou dost look, not at what we are so much, as to that to which we shall come through our faults, through our frequent downfalls and sins, through our weakness. All the glory of our future estate is before thee. For, is not our name in thy book? Is not our place waiting for us? Are there not for us palms? Are we not yet, as spirits of just men made perfect, to stand in thy presence above? Are we not to hold on a course of joy forevermore? And is it not all open before thee? Naked and open are we before Him with whom we have to do. And thou dost look royally upon us, and wait till we emerge, till we grow, and outgrow our manifold imperfections and sins. And from day to day, with infinite tenderness thou dost forgive the sins of the day. From day to day with sorrow thou dost help us to sorrow, and with cleansing repentance thou dost teach us to forsake our sins. And thou art still working in us. Thou art healing us. And when thou hast healed us, we become more and more precious to thee. For we know, in our lesser sphere, that those for whom we do the most become most to us. We see how parents cling to the most needy of their children, to succor them, and to bring them through their infirmities, and love them with a strength that is in proportion to the strength which they have given them. And in that we desire to interpret thee, and to rejoice in the experience which thus is a symbol of God's government to us. And oh! if thou dost love us in proportion to our faults, how deep is thy sympathy! and how strong is thy yearning! Thou that wilt not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax till thou dost bring forth judgment unto victory; how great is the sum of thy mercy toward us for whom thou hast done so much, who still need so much, and

who will to the very end of life need so much. For there is not a day before us that is not to have its dark shadows. We have not yet learned to carry our pride in consonance with love. We have not yet learned to carry about the truth in its purity. We have not yet learned to overcome vanity, and an undue love of praise from men rather than from God. We have not yet learned how to counterbalance our senses by our spiritual life. We forget thee; we forget heaven; we forget our errands upon earth; we forget our better selves; we are often baptized in darkness, and seldom in hope, and light, and joy. All that is in us yet nascent. All that thou art doing for us, thou art doing for those who are yet to be. In life we are as children in the womb, and are to be born only when death comes and opens to let us forth into the clearness and blessedness of our life in heaven. Thou art carrying us. We are born, and we are to be born, of thee. And we rejoice in this fullness; in the disclosure of thy nursing love, of thy patient waiting; of thy all-formative mercy. We rejoice that we are what we are, not by grace in ourselves, and not by our own power, which is but little, and unexercised, and unwise, and unskilled, but by the mighty power of God. And our hope is not that we shall overcome our adversaries, but that we shall have the generous love and companionship of Christ Jesus, who will not suffer any to perish, but will bear the lambs in his arms; who will go out after the sheep that wander from the path in the wilderness, and bring them back with infinite tenderness and gentleness, and rejoice over one that wanders more than over all the flock that has kept its estate. How wonderful is the insight which we get of thy mercy! How wonderful is the realm and glory of God's heart, where no contending, no rage and no passion are; where medicating mercy is; where is upbuilding love; where infinite patience and gentleness are; where the growths of all creation, coming up through labor pain, and groaning and travailing until now, are nourished and supervised until thou shalt bring forth judgment unto victory.

Lord, our God! thou art such an one as we need—a refuge, a defense out of ourselves, and out of our fears, which are of the Devil. We flee away to thee, and come into the fulness of trust, and into the obedience of trust. We desire not to offend thee again by untruthfulness, having offended thee by sin; but may we know thy loving and tender mercy, and thy forgiving love and gentleness; may we know how to draw thee as thou art drawing us.

And now we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt help every one that is seeking to live higher and better than he has lived. Help those to reform who only mean reformation; and yet do better for them than they ask or think. Help those who are coming out of evil courses into newness of life. Though they be babes in Christ, and wander often, and cry, still bear them with patience and with care, until they are able to be men in Christ Jesus.

Be with all who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and long for higher attainments in the divine life. We pray that they may have that perfect peace which passeth all understanding.

And now, as we are walking in the infirmities and sins of this life, so may we walk in the common hope and certainty that, after life has dealt with us, and disciplined us, and purified us, we shall meet together nobler in companionship, better for love, purer and truer, better worthy of each other. And then we shall wonder that we found it so hard to bear with each other on earth. Then we shall wonder that we did so little good, that we had so much of reproach, and that we were so little helpful to each other. Then, in the glory of that ecstatic vision, how will they stand royal to our eye who are so full of faults, and against whom we gnash with accusation and criticism. And grant that the coming hope, the coming joy, the certainty of redemption, the beauty of the love that is to be in heaven, may shine back through faith upon us, and that we may see these things even

now though but in shadow, and toward those that are in delusion and folly, be more gentle, more patient, more helpful.

Bless all the households that belong to this congregation. Bless parents and children. We pray that the young may grow up able to discern and to eschew what is evil, and to embrace that which is high-minded and noble, and good.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt bless all the labor of the Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes—all that are teaching, and all that are taught. Remember, we beseech thee, those who go forth, from day to day, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, to find the wanderers, and who in the streets and in prisons, and everywhere, seek to make known Jesus Christ. And we pray that their labor may not be in vain.

And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing upon all the churches of this city, and of the great city near us, and throughout all this land. And may this day be a day of mercy everywhere. And may those that are feebly seeking in waste places, and under circumstances of discouragement, to do good, feel the inward strength of God moving them to their duties this day.

And may thy kingdom come everywhere. Look upon the whole earth, now shaken with the tread of thy feet. Going forth for wrath, and for a wrath that is to reveal mercy, when thou shalt have smitten, and burned, and rocked, and overthrown, and done the terrible work with the plow of thy justice, then open the upturned furrows; and grant that the seeds of righteousness and peace may be sown, and that the nations of the earth may learn war no more, but that all lands may see thy salvation, and every man sit under his own vine and fig tree, and the joy of God be the possession of the whole earth.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit, evermore.
Amen.

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